

to see his picture on exhibition it would at least signalize artistic recognition.

But now—the gloomy future seemed to express one practical word—Bread! The coffers were empty. With the morning there must be food for Nash, the room rent must be paid.

Tap! tap! tap!

Daintily as at the touch of a veritable fairy the gentle but peremptory summons sounded. Ranald went to the door and opened it. He passed his hand over his eyes then, dazzled at the lovely visitant.

"It's only me, Mr. Stone," spoke notes of liquid sweetness. "You remember me—at the art institute? I have a room and studio on the next floor. I was directed here because the drawing professor said this was the abode of true genius and among its denizens I would get the real art atmosphere. Oh, dear!"

The ingenuous little lady stood gazing raptly at the picture between the windows. The tears came to the eyes of the artist. It was homage so soulful, so refreshing to his tired spirit!

"Thank you," he said huskily.

"And will you do me a great favor, Mr. Stone?" pleaded Miss Ethel Warner. "It will take only a few moments. In my studio. Just to show me how to mix some colors."

"Certainly, with pleasure," responded Ranald, and he tried to hide the ragged sleeve of his worn coat.

The light, the comfort, the luxury of the little palace of a studio into which Miss Warner ushered Ranald and introduced him to her chaperone, her aunt, formed a marked contrast to the bleak den he had just left. The fascination of the soulful girl artist, however, made him obliging, even ardent in awarding the assistance she required. Upon a stand stood her model: a server, a loaf of bread, part of a cake, some flowers, a composite for a test piece as to coloring.

"I can't get the shade of that bread any more than could I bake it,"

laughed Ethel merrily, and then when Ranald had shown her how to produce the effect desired, she looked up into his eyes with a gratitude that thrilled him.

The influence of that lovely face remained with him as he sat in his studio later thinking of the brightness his life knew little of. Then from the alcove, weak and querulous—

"Ranald, old man, I'm hungry. I'm so hungry I can't sleep."

The words went through the mighty heart of the artist like a knife. He glanced from the street window at the brilliantly lighted shops. Money he had none, credit was exhausted. Then he gave a great start. A suggestion had come to his mind.

Dozing on a divan in her sitting-room off her studio, Ethel saw the door opened. "Burglars!" was her first thought, and then she recognized Ranald. She watched him in amazement steal across the room, seize the loaf of bread near her easel and disappear.

"Why!" she gasped, arising to her feet, "what does it mean?"

Ranald watched his sick friend attempt to assuage the pangs of hunger with the dry bread.

"Drop it!" he ordered, his voice a sob. "I'll soon have the delicacies you need."

He darted one poignant glance at his picture as he dashed from the room. A girlish form passed into it from the lurking shadows. Then at the side of the invalid she learned all of the truth.

"I will take it, yes," fell in sharp nasal tones on the ears of two listeners as Ranald led Levi into his studio. "Fifty toll—"

"I will give a hundred!" cried Ethel, appearing from the alcove.

The pawnbroker stared at her in bewilderment. The artist fell weakly to a chair.

"Is dis an' auction?" insinuated Levi.

"If you like," replied Ethel, her